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Ontario Teacher Testing Program

AN OVERVIEW



Ontario

Ministry of
Education

Introduction

Skilled Teachers Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World

Teachers are critically important to ensuring that students achieve their potential. Most parents would agree that the quality of their child's teacher will affect whether their child has an enriching and rewarding school year. Excellent teachers can motivate, inspire, and challenge students to accomplish things they never thought possible. Indeed, skilled teachers are the key to preparing students for postsecondary study, working life, and civic responsibility.

There are many excellent, dedicated teachers in Ontario. In today's rapidly changing world, teachers, like other professionals, need to keep learning and improving their skills to prepare students to take their place in the global economy. The Ontario Teacher Testing Program is being designed so that all teachers have the up-to-date skills, knowledge, and training to provide Ontario students with the high-quality education they need and deserve.

Several initiatives are being implemented as part of the Ontario Teacher Testing Program in 2002:

- All new teachers in Ontario will now have to take a qualifying test before they can teach in an Ontario classroom.

- To maintain their professional certification, teachers must now take courses throughout their careers to continually update their knowledge and skills.
- Principals must now evaluate teachers' ability to use their skills and knowledge in the classroom on a regular basis, using made-in-Ontario evaluation standards.

Two additional elements are being planned as part of the Teacher Testing Program:

- an induction or mentoring program that would provide new teachers with the guidance and advice of experienced teachers;
- a new Ontario teacher recognition program that would highlight the efforts of excellent teachers.

Ongoing Consultation

The Teacher Testing Program responds to the concerns and advice heard in the ministry's consultations with parents, teacher groups, principals and vice-principals, students, trustees, the Ontario College of Teachers, faculties of education, and other education partners. The ministry is continuing to consult with these partners.

Certification of New Teachers in Ontario

Ensuring Language Proficiency

Since September 2000, all teaching certificate applicants from outside Ontario who obtained their teacher training in a language other than English or French have been required to pass an oral and written language proficiency test. The test ensures that these applicants can communicate clearly in either English or French before they receive certification to teach in Ontario.

Introducing a Qualifying Test

New teachers in Ontario will now have to pass a standard, province-wide qualifying test before they can start teaching in Ontario schools.

The Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test will ensure that all new teachers know their curriculum subjects and teaching strategies before they stand in front of a classroom. Both new graduates from Ontario faculties of education and teachers coming to Ontario from outside the province will have to pass the new qualifying test.

Timeline: To prepare for the implementation of the qualifying test, the Ontario Principals' Council and an advisory group of stakeholders is working with the test

developer to design and field-test a made-in-Ontario qualifying test. The ministry plans to administer the qualifying test for the first time to new faculty of education graduates and to teachers new to Ontario schools in May 2002.

Providing Coaching and Support

The ministry will also be designing an induction program that would provide all new teachers with coaching and support from more experienced colleagues. This program would help to ensure that new teachers get off to a strong start at the beginning of their careers.

Timeline: The teacher induction program will be developed in 2002.

Mandatory Professional Learning

Ontario teachers must take courses to maintain their skills and knowledge throughout their careers.

Certified teachers will be required to continue updating their knowledge and skills throughout their teaching careers. New legislation requires that all certified teachers in Ontario complete 14 mandatory professional learning courses over each five-year cycle to maintain their professional certification. Teachers will select 7 core courses and 7 elective courses from a list of courses approved by the Ontario College of Teachers.

While the courses may be offered by a variety of providers, including school boards, faculties of education, teacher federations, and others, all mandatory professional learning courses and course providers must be approved by the Professional Learning Committee of the Ontario College of Teachers.

One of the committee's responsibilities is to ensure that all approved professional learning courses contribute to student achievement, include an assessment component, and are consistent with professional standards in Ontario, as developed by the Ontario College of Teachers.

Ontario's new professional learning requirements recognize and build on the professional development

activities in which many teachers are already involved, in order to ensure that teachers have the skills and knowledge to provide a high-quality education for Ontario students.

Amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, require that teachers meet these new professional learning standards in order to maintain their certification.

Timelines: About a third (40,000) of practising classroom teachers, as well as all new classroom teachers, began their first mandatory professional learning cycle in 2001. All other certified teachers, including principals and vice-principals, will start their first professional learning cycle in September 2002.

Core Course Categories

Over each five-year cycle, teachers must complete at least one course from each of the following core categories: special education, technology in the classroom, curriculum, student assessment, teaching strategies, communicating with parents and students, and classroom management and leadership.

Teachers will also complete 7 elective courses from a list of approved courses.

Performance Appraisal

Ontario teachers will be assessed on a regular basis and in a fair and consistent manner by their principals to ensure that they are applying their skills and knowledge effectively in the classroom.

Evaluation of Classroom Skills

New province-wide teacher performance appraisal standards will ensure that all Ontario teachers are evaluated on their ability to use their skills and their knowledge effectively in the classroom. The ministry worked with education stakeholders to design a consistent performance appraisal system.

New provincial standards for performance appraisal will ensure that principals evaluate teachers' skills and classroom performance regularly and in a fair and consistent manner.

Teachers who receive poor evaluations will be given the time and support needed to improve.

Parents and senior students will be given an opportunity to provide input into the teacher evaluation process.

Timeline: The new performance appraisal standards will be implemented in 2002.

Recognizing Teacher Excellence

Ontario will consult stakeholders about the design of a province-wide system that would recognize the work of Ontario's outstanding teachers. The goal is to develop a system that would acknowledge excellence in teaching.

Timeline: A new teacher recognition system will be developed in 2002.

Helping the Teaching Profession Meet Global Standards

Meeting public expectations for quality and excellence is not a challenge faced by teachers alone. Many professions today have a variety of entry requirements, standards for professional development, and ongoing assessment and accountability practices.

Teachers in other countries are also being challenged to continually update their skills and knowledge. Many U.S. states, for example, currently require professional development for certificate renewal. Countries such as Australia, England, France, New Zealand, and the United States are focusing their assessment programs on both new and established teachers. Across Canada, a number of provinces are also addressing the issue of quality teaching.

Ontario has looked at the best of what other professions and jurisdictions are doing, and is in the process of developing a made-in-Ontario program that sets new standards and practices for teacher quality and teaching excellence.

With these initiatives to support our teachers – ongoing professional learning, ongoing performance appraisals, and the qualifying test for new teachers – parents can

be assured that their children are receiving a high-quality education, provided by the best-qualified and most highly skilled professionals in Canada.

For more information about the Ontario Teacher Testing Program or about other government plans to support student achievement and ensure quality and accountability in education, visit the Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

Une publication équivalente est disponible en français
sous le titre suivant :
Programme ontarien d'évaluation du personnel enseignant : un aperçu.



Printed on recycled paper

ISBN 0-7794-2106-X

01-198

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